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President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 52 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/387 and Corr.1)

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Pakistan supports the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations. His resolve to enhance the centrality of the United Nations in international affairs reflects the aspirations of the world's peoples. The continuing process of reform and revitalization of our Organization is essential to enable it to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the new world that is emerging at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change". We hope that this debate will help to shape an agreed and effective response to the important proposals and recommendations presented in the report.

Broadly, the report addresses three categories of issues. First, there are proposals that seek to streamline the functioning of the Secretariat and strengthen the work of the intergovernmental machinery. Such proposals should generally receive strong support from the Assembly. A second category are those proposals which have an impact on intergovernmental processes. On these, the Assembly should provide guidance to the Secretary-General, inter alia, through this debate. Then there is a third category of issues which require either clarification from the Secretariat or adequate intergovernmental consideration to enable the evolution of broadly acceptable decisions.

Let me explain Pakistan's views on some of the major issues covered in the Secretary-General's report.

We agree that United Nations programmes and actions should reflect the current and emerging priorities of the Organization. The Millennium Declaration presents an overarching vision which broadly reflects these priorities. However, it is inevitable that in a rapidly globalizing world, problems and priorities will continue to change and evolve.

We are glad that the Secretary-General has clarified that the priorities mentioned in his report reflect only an illustrative and not an exhaustive list. We believe that a broader and balanced list of priorities should be identified through this debate and the ensuing informal consultations for appropriate reflection in our decisions.

There is an obvious need to rationalize and streamline the human rights machinery of the United Nations. Action is required at least at three levels. First, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights needs to be considerably overhauled. We need to ensure that the funding of various human rights activities of the Office reflect the priorities set by Member States, and especially by the Commission on Human Rights. United Nations human rights programmes should

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normally all be financed through the regular budget. The balance between the promotion of civil and political and economic and social rights, including the right to development, needs to be promoted and maintained. Balance also needs to be introduced in the composition of the personnel of the Office of the High Commissioner.

Secondly, the numerous human rights mechanisms also need to be streamlined. At present there are about 30 special rapporteurs and representatives established by the Commission. The mandates of many of those mechanisms overlap, and every special rapporteur apparently seeks to cover every nook and cranny of the mandate he is assigned. Lengthy reports by the special rapporteurs are not subjected to any in-depth examination; nor do they evoke genuine dialogue. The Commission on Human Rights should be asked to recommend how these special mechanisms, which have proliferated, can be reduced in number and enhanced in efficiency and relevance.

Thirdly, the promotion of human rights at the country level needs to be pursued in a well-considered way. The introduction of human rights officers into United Nations country offices is not the best way to do that. Since such country offices exist mostly in the developing countries, it will reinforce the impression that human rights problems exist only in the developing world.

We support the restructuring of the Department of Public Information (DPI). The priority themes, from which will emerge the key United Nations messages, should be determined by the Committee on Information, not by DPI. We are not convinced of the viability of creating regional hubs — at least, not in some regions. In the first instance, the Committee on Information should formulate broad guidelines and criteria, to be applied in each region, bearing in mind the region's particularities.

We support the Secretary-General's proposal in section III to reduce the number of reports and meetings. The vast proliferation of both has overtaken the absorptive capabilities of small and even medium-sized delegations and is undermining the representational value of our deliberations and decisions. We trust that the production of concise reports will not take place at the cost of ensuring political balance or excluding issues in areas of importance to the developing countries.

We support, in principle, the steps proposed in section IV to improve field coordination. For the common programming suggested in action 14, it would be advisable to seek the views of the relevant United Nations agencies and countries concerned. We support the enhanced responsibility being given to the Adviser for Special Assignments in Africa.

We would welcome the preparation and submission to the Economic and Social Council of a document clarifying the roles and responsibilities of various United Nations technical assistance programmes, with a view to their rationalization.

The Secretary-General's proposal to organize the relationship of the United Nations with civil society is a timely and important initiative. Civil society is playing an increasingly important role in economic and social development, governance and peace and security issues. However, the number of civil society organizations has increased exponentially in recent years. Not all organizations are of the same quality and credibility. To avail itself of their contribution, the United Nations needs to evaluate in greater depth the strengths and expertise of each organization and create mechanisms through which their contributions in relevant areas can be best obtained. We recommend that the Committee on Non-governmental Organizations of the Economic and Social Council, meeting at the level of permanent representative, should propose guidelines and actions for this purpose.

We share the Secretary-General's dissatisfaction with the planning and budgetary process of the United Nations. We are not fully convinced, however, that the solution proposed in the report is the best one. The present planning and budgetary process has worked fairly well for many years. The Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), which is a subsidiary body of both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, looks at the medium-term plan (MTP) from a programmatic perspective so as to ensure that the proposed programmes correspond to the mandates given by intergovernmental bodies. This is an extremely important role and serves as a check on the possible misinterpretation of intergovernmental mandates. The weakness is not the result of the process. It arises from the fact that representation on the CPC has not been of a level

conducive to examination of the MTP from a policy perspective. The MTP has also, traditionally, been a long document, and tedious to read and absorb. If we can ensure a more concise and strategic MTP, coupled with higher level participation in the CPC — for example, at the level of senior officials or permanent representatives — we would not need to overturn a tried and tested system in favour of a new and as yet unclear arrangement.

There may be other options that could serve the purpose, for example, making the CPC an expert body along the same lines as the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The Pakistani delegation proposes that this issue be discussed by an open-ended working group, meeting at the level of permanent representatives, assisted by experts, during the course of the fifty-seventh session, with a view to taking a decision at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. With regard to human resource management, discussed in section VI of the report, Pakistan supports, in principle, measures which promote efficiency in the Secretariat and help to create a versatile and well-managed workforce employed on the basis of merit and competence and with due regard to geographical balance.

We understand that following this debate, Mr. President, you intend to hold informal discussions to draw up a draft resolution which will provide the Secretary-General with the strategic guidance he has sought from the General Assembly. The draft resolution to be adopted at this stage should incorporate the Assembly's responses to the different kinds of actions proposed in the Secretary-General's report. We look forward to your suggestion, Sir, about the mechanism you wish to use in proceeding to elaborate the decision of the General Assembly. We are confident that under your able leadership the process of negotiation will be transparent and inclusive, and ensure appropriate reflection of the views expressed by Member States in this debate.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau (Viet Nam): My delegation would like to commend the Secretary-General very highly for initiating the debate on this important item, entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system". We also thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his role in respect of the report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", which is contained in document A/57/387. In that relatively short but concise report, which has helped to save a great deal in financial terms, she and her team have presented to the General Assembly a series of suggestions with the aim of making this Organization stronger and more effective so that it can achieve the goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration. Our delegation welcomes the report and wishes to make some observations on certain aspects of it.

The need for a strong and effective United Nations is becoming increasingly imperative in this century. It is obvious that the goals set out in the Millennium Declaration cannot be successfully pursued without strengthening the Organization. The reform process aimed at further rationalizing the structure of the United Nations, therefore, should be continued and accelerated. My delegation pledges its total support for the enhancement of the Organization's backbone organs, especially the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

As far as the General Assembly is concerned, we support recent steps aimed at improving its working methods, such as the decision to elect the President and the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly, as well as the officers of the Main Committees, three months before the beginning of the regular session, or the practice of discussing interlinked items together during plenary meetings and meetings of the Main Committees.

With regard to the Security Council, we fully agree with the report that no reform of the United Nations would be complete without reform of the Council. It is no secret that that organ should be more accountable to the General Assembly, more representative to reflect today's reality — through the expansion of both the non-permanent and permanent categories of its membership — and more democratic and more transparent in its working methods. While taking note of the improvements in the Council's working methods, such as the increased number of open meetings with the participation of non-Council members, we regret that the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform has been unable to make any progress after a decade of discussion, leaving the painful impression that it is beating a dead horse.

Two years ago, the leaders of United Nations Member States defined the following as our priorities:

> "the fight for development for all the peoples of the world, the fight against poverty, ignorance and disease; the fight against injustice; the fight against violence, terror and crime; and the fight against the degradation ... of our common home." (*A/RES/55/2, para. 29*)

Undoubtedly, those priorities should be at the top of the United Nations agenda and our principal activities. Although the International Conference on Financing for Development, held at Monterrey, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held at Johannesburg, have somehow lived up to our expectations, we need more concrete actions and measures. We also need a mechanism to coordinate development efforts on a global scale to enable developing countries to take advantage of all the opportunities that globalization offers, especially with regard to trade and investment, and to ensure their greater involvement in the decision-making process.

In that context, we find that section II of the report, entitled "Doing what matters", appears somewhat unbalanced, since many vital issues — such as those of development and poverty eradication — have not been given the attention envisaged in the Millennium Declaration, while certain other issues have been singled out and addressed through very specific and concrete actions.

Concerning the organization of work of the Secretariat, it should be noted that the Secretary-General has proposed a large number of measures to that effect, such as streamlining reports, improving the planning of meetings, coordinating the activities of the Secretaries of the Main Committees, restructuring United Nations Information Centres, improving United Nations libraries and improving document management. My delegation is of the view that any reform in the direction of streamlining, rooting out redundancies and duplications, is to be encouraged and supported, provided that it does not involve financial implications and that concerns raised by Member States are adequately addressed.

Lastly but not least, my delegation shares the Secretary-General's view that the competence of staff ensures their vital contributions to the success of the Organization. We note with satisfaction that the Secretary- General is committed to the recruitment of qualified candidates from unrepresented or underrepresented countries. In that respect, we should like to see concrete measures to rectify the existing unbalanced recruiting mechanism.

In conclusion, I should like to express my delegation's highest appreciation of the Secretary-General's efforts to make the United Nations a stronger and more effective instrument in the service of people around the world. I assure him of my delegation's full cooperation and support, and I sincerely hope to warmly welcome him to Viet Nam sometime next year.

Mr. Kasemsarn (Thailand): I should like to begin by adding my voice to all those who have spoken before me in expressing our appreciation to the Secretary-General for sharing with us his thoughts and plans in his report on strengthening of the United Nations system (A/57/387). I also wish to thank Ms. Louise Fréchette, Deputy Secretary-General, for giving Member countries further details on the issues raised in the report.

The report provides us with a broad overview of how the Secretary-General intends to bring about changes and improvement with regard to the Secretariat so that it can better serve the Organization and its Member States. It also raises some challenging questions regarding the revitalization of United Nations intergovernmental bodies with respect not only to their working methods but also to their relevance and effectiveness in dealing with the myriad challenges of the globalized world. Those thoughts and plans will certainly serve us well as we review the reform process of the entire Organization. Our debate today on this item is thus timely and significant, and it should also be viewed in the wider context of the reform of the Security Council and of the General Assembly.

My delegation commends the Secretary-General for pursuing this matter as one of his top priorities when he took office as chief executive of the Organization in 1997. Indeed, he has initiated many valuable improvements in the performance and functioning of the United Nations by reshaping, reorganizing and consolidating the Secretariat. Thailand welcomes those initiatives and will continue to support his efforts to bring about further improvements at the United Nations.

We believe that, as a universal multilateral institution, the United Nations needs to evolve with the changing times and landscape in order to remain effective and relevant. The Organization's reform process should be implemented with full consideration

of the aspirations and expectations of Member States, as well as of the various levels of development among them. My delegation should therefore like to offer some of our thoughts and ideas on ways to improve the functioning of the Organization.

First, it is my delegation's view that the Millennium Declaration and the major international Conferences of the past decade should serve as the road map for the United Nations in the elaboration of its programme of work. A thorough review of United Nations activities is needed to ensure that the Organization is properly focused on tackling urgent issues, such as globalization and its impact on development, poverty eradication, HIV/AIDS, human rights, the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, and conflict prevention, and that it is able to produce tangible results. My delegation therefore hopes that the Secretary-General can offer a more comprehensive review of the Organization, taking into account these priority issues, so that its strengths and weaknesses can be assessed.

Secondly, Thailand welcomes the Secretary-General's plan to bring about greater coherence, efficiency and effectiveness among the various United Nations agencies and programmes in host countries. We support the idea of developing a common pooling of resources, joint programming, common databases and knowledge networks among the agencies and programmes without significant impact on the existing budget allocations. This approach is similar to the Thai Government's concept of chief executive officer for the administration of its public organizations abroad, which involves, inter alia, pooling resources and encouraging teamwork under a unified structure and command.

Thirdly, Thailand is of the opinion that the Secretary-General's plan to increase resources in real terms, aside from adjustments arising from inflation and currency changes, for the revised programme budget starting from the period 2002-2003, may not be feasible at this time. A number of developing and least-developed countries are still in the process of recovering from the financial crises of the late 1990s and, indeed, a few others are experiencing financial and economic difficulties at the moment. The principle of the capacity to pay of developing and least-developed countries, which make up the majority of the Members of this Organization, must be taken into account in all the deliberations on this issue. The approach we should be taking on this issue is to examine how to increase budget savings through reforms so that they can be used to maintain future programme budgets at the current level.

Fourthly, the Secretary-General's proposal to improve planning and budgeting systems by synchronizing the medium-term plan with the biennial proposed programme budget to cover two years seems pragmatic and sensible. This is also the case with regard to the Secretary-General's request for more flexibility in the reallocation of resources between programmes of up to 10 per cent within a single budgetary period. Thailand hopes that such measures will lead to better financial management of the Organization. We also support the proposed plan to improve and simplify the planning and budgeting systems of regular and peacekeeping budgets, as well as voluntary trust funds, which are the main resources in implementing the Organization's programme of work.

Lastly, the issue of the human resources of the Organization is a matter of great interest and concern to all delegations. We fully support the mechanisms and incentives to improve the efficiency of human resources, particularly in the recruitment, promotion and remuneration processes. We also support the suggestion to abolish the restrictions on the number of General Service staff eligible for promotion to the Professional category and to raise the annual quota of P-2 posts available for successful G-to-P exam candidates to 25 per cent. My delegation hopes to see these suggestions implemented at the earliest opportunity without any restriction on or discrimination among any qualified General Service staff.

At this crucial period of changes and uncertainties, the United Nations, as a universal multilateral institution, represents the best hope of humanity for a more peaceful, caring and prosperous world. The ability of the Organization to live up to the expectations of the international community will depend on two important ingredients. One is the ability and readiness of the Secretariat, with its body of highly competent professional staff, to change and adapt to the ever-increasing demands placed on it. The other is the firm commitment of Member countries to support and contribute to the work of the Organization, which should be practical and commensurate with their limited resources. These two ingredients must

complement one another in order for the United Nations to remain relevant in these challenging times and to become an agent for more effective change in the service of humanity. Thailand remains steadfast in its support for a more effective and relevant United Nations and will continue to play its part to achieve this end.

Mr. Rivas (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for introducing his report. No item among those before the United Nations will be successful if we do not seek daily to strengthen the United Nations. That is why Colombia welcomes the report, which proposes a path to be followed and establishes a series of measures to be undertaken by the Secretary-General and by the main organs of the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council.

My delegation recognizes the Organization's achievements in recent years on a broad spectrum of items. The leadership of the United Nations has been essential in making progress on such goals as the eradication of poverty and the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as well as for the success of some peacekeeping operations, such as those in Sierra Leone, Kosovo and Timor-Leste.

However, in order to make definitive progress in all areas of concern to the Organization and effectively to solve all the problems confronting the international community today, we need a greater commitment from the Member States to the United Nations. We must consider and apply such bold and ambitious ideas as those put forward by the Secretary-General to strengthen the Organization. We need to revitalize its main organs and to make them more efficient by aligning them with the realities of our peoples.

While the United Nations faces serious problems today, such as the weakening of multilateralism and the administrative and bureaucratic difficulties typical of a truly global Organization, there is no doubt that our peoples see the United Nations as a solid and respectable institution that responds, within its means, to the challenges it faces and that has incorporated into its field of action the contribution of various international State actors. Their views greatly revitalize and enrich the discussions on and search for solutions to the sensitive problems and issues on the global agenda.

However, a great deal remains to be done. That is why Colombia is participating and will continue to participate actively in informal open-ended consultations and groups to consider the Secretary-General's proposals. We will study the means put forward by the Secretary-General within his field of competence. We will promote the measures suggested by the Secretary-General and others that we consider to be useful to the revitalization of the General Assembly. A forum such as the General Assembly, whose universality and membership make it extremely important, must overcome the difficulties afflicting it today: the overlapping of items, repetitious and sterile debates and the negotiation of resolutions with little political impact, among others.

Another fundamental aspect that Member States must address in the process of strengthening the United Nations is reform of the Security Council in terms of both its methods of work and its membership. Colombia will continue to promote this process with a view to making the Security Council more representative in its membership and more flexible in its working methods.

In his report, the Secretary-General has presented a list of 36 actions or measures aimed at addressing the challenges arising from the shortcomings detected in the functioning of the Organization. The informal consultations that have begun on this item will provide the opportunity to refer to each of these actions in greater detail. Allow me for the time being to reiterate my delegation's willingness to consider and promote the reforms required by the United Nations, to which our peoples and Governments have assigned the difficult task of maintaining peace and security, solving the major problems on the international agenda, preserving the environment and promoting the economic and social development of humankind.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to say how much we in Kuwait appreciate the outstanding efforts that Secretary-General Kofi Annan is making to strengthen the role of the United Nations, to ensure its effectiveness, to make it dynamic and flexible in dealing with international changes and challenges and to enhance its ability to face up to those challenges, in line with the expectations of people the world over.

My delegation has studied the Secretary-General's report (A/57/387) on the item under

consideration, "Strengthening of the United Nations System". The report sets out actions that constitute the second phase of the reform strategy that the Secretary-General initiated when he assumed office in 1997. We also appreciate the Secretary-General's interest in the views of States on the issue. This important issue includes matters affecting our daily work at Headquarters. It must be considered carefully and appropriate agreed action should be taken in order to implement the measures proposed in the report.

Let me say, before discussing in detail the Secretary-General's report on reform, that Kuwait believes that it is important for us to reach agreement on the general principles to guide our approach in dealing with this issue. First, the reform process must be continuous and uninterrupted. It must take into consideration the principle of flexibility in formulating and implementing reform measures. Secondly, the viewpoints of all Member States must be considered on an equal footing. Actions ought to be debated in keeping with the principle of transparency.

Thirdly, we believe that the reform process is a collective responsibility to be shared between the Secretariat and Member States. Here, we underline the Secretariat's principal role in drawing the attention of States to issues and questions on which reform measures would be to everyone's benefit. We believe that frank interaction and dialogue between the Secretariat and Member States ought to be the method for approaching this issue.

Fourthly, the key factor to success in reform efforts is to take quick measures to implement without delay agreed reform proposals, and to postpone action on those issues not yet agreed upon.

The fifth principle is renewed belief that the United Nations is an intergovernmental Organization whose objective is to serve the peoples of the world. Therefore, the reform process must take into consideration the political dimensions of all issues. We believe that the reform process must be in line with the political reality of the positions of Member States. We do not believe that the corporate profit-making method can succeed in reforming an Organization such as the United Nations.

If we were to agree on those general principles, we could then base our work on them when we debate the technical details of the reform process proposed in the Secretary-General's report under consideration. Here, I propose that the President of the General Assembly concentrate first and foremost on action to be taken and on the approach to be adopted for consultations. Allow me to propose the following points in that regard: informal consultations could be held during which all the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report would be debated under an agenda set up for each meeting. Actions to be debated would be organized under the main headings of the report. Member States would be allowed to express their views on the technical aspects of each action. We would thus see which proposals enjoy the general agreement of Member States.

Secondly, Mr. President, you could follow up those meetings and debates through representatives whom you would appoint to assist you and pinpoint those measures and proposals that enjoy general agreement among Member States. These could subsequently be incorporated into a draft resolution for adoption and implementation as soon as Member States had completed their consultations on them.

Thirdly, I would propose that once the positions of States as expressed during the debate on the item have been analyzed, the proposals in the Secretary-General's report should be catogorized and listed to make it easier to deal with them through the draft resolution and subsequent action on the proposals.

Following a quick examination of the nature of the proposals in the report, my delegation believes that they can be divided as follows. The first category includes actions related to the prerogatives of the Secretary-General: ones he can take without ascertaining the views of Member States. Nevertheless, it is important for such actions to be included in any draft resolution to be adopted so that they can receive the blessing of Member States. The second category includes proposals related to urgent issues on which general agreement has been expressed by Member States in the debate. These include issues related to streamlining the work of the General Assembly, and to decreasing the number of reports and meetings by United Nations bodies. The third category includes technical proposals to be debated in the relevant technical bodies by members of those bodies and by other concerned Member States. The fourth category includes measures which, for the time being, have been set aside, and on which no urgent action can be taken. These include strategic issues and those related to the philosophy of the work of the United Nations. These

require in-depth study and Member States must be given sufficient time to consider them without adopting any action on them. Some examples are the role of civil society, partnership with the private sector, how to deal with United Nations staff members suffering from HIV/AIDS, measures regarding the Department of Public Information and other measures of great interest to all Member States. My delegation will contribute effectively and positively to the consultations to be held soon on the item. That will be an opportunity for us to clearly express our position on all measures proposed, particularly the ones my delegation supports and agrees with. First, we support the Secretary-General's ideas on a comprehensive approach to taking up items on the agenda of the United Nations. Secondly, we fully support all measures and proposals to alleviate the burden on Member States with small delegations and on the Secretariat, namely by reducing the number of meetings and reports and simplifying the working methods of all United Nations bodies, particularly the General Assembly. I call on the Assembly to adopt measures on those issues in a timely manner. Thirdly, we support strengthening the efficiency and capabilities of the United Nations staff without discrimination, considering that they are international civil servants, particularly General Service staff.

In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to the Secretariat for measures taken in cooperation with Member States to streamline the activities of the General Assembly. The fruits of those efforts are already being enjoyed at this very session. We believe they are an example to be followed when taking up the Secretary-General's proposals contained in the report under consideration today.

At the same time, we must stress that our main objective is to continue consolidating the concept of a United Nations culture, which we have included in all school curricula in Kuwait. It is a concept that drives us — Member States or Secretariat employees, the true face of the Organization in the eyes of the peoples and Governments of the world — to achieve reform in the service of all.

Mr. Pradhan (Bhutan): We must be sensitive to the fact that the United Nations in the twenty-first century is a truly universal organization. In the fulfilment of this most crucial role and its Charter obligations, the United Nations is called upon to deal with multifarious issues. Those relate to peace and security, social welfare, the environment, sustainable economic development, poverty alleviation and a host of other issues that will impact our planet and the future of humankind for generations to come. That is indeed an onerous undertaking and responsibility. As diverse as the membership of this world body is, so is the agenda with which it is compelled to deal.

We need a United Nations that is inherently dynamic in its functioning. After all, the international issues that it is required to consider and deal with are ever changing and ever evolving. In such circumstances, an outdated structure cannot cope with the challenges of the times, and the bodies of the United Nations need reforms from time to time to face those new situations.

As mentioned by speakers before me, small delegations, especially those that have difficult manpower and financial positions, find it impossible to cope with the large number of meetings and the piles of documents that emanate from the United Nations. That matter has been noted in the Secretary-General's report in paragraphs 23 and 88. While meetings and documents are essential features of our work, the sheer volume of reports and the number of meetings are simply overwhelming. The question that we must pose is, have those reports and meetings served their legitimate and intended purposes? There is a need to closely and objectively look into that matter, and see how that untenable situation has come about and what the Member States and the Secretariat need to do to rectify the situation.

In paragraph 24, the Secretary-General stated that "Summit fatigue has set in", and, in a way, that is true. In the past, my delegation has cautioned against convening summit level meetings on too many issues or on matters on which the international community has not reached the stage when a summit becomes justified. In addition, summit decisions are not fully and properly implemented, making the credibility of summits questionable in the eyes of Governments and the general public. Any proposal for a summit should be carefully considered. Guidelines and criteria need to be established and an adequate period of time must be taken to access the requirement for a summit. There should be sound and credible reasons for involving the highest levels of our Governments. The Secretary-General might like to give his recommendations on the criteria for calling summits. I am sure that this will be helpful to Member States in taking suitable decisions.

An issue of critical importance in strengthening the United Nations system is the reform of the Security Council, which is long overdue. The Council must be made inclusive and democratic, and must also reflect the aspirations of the Member countries that were not there and not involved in setting up the Organization in 1945, over half a century ago. Many debates have taken place for nearly a decade on the need to reform this major organ, and yet proposals for substantive change have met with adamant resistance. The permanent, as well as the non-permanent, membership has to be expanded to reflect the universality of the United Nations. The issue of continuing with the veto power also deserves further and careful consideration.

The matter of financing the activities of the United Nations has been of great concern to Member States. On the one hand, Member States, whether it is in the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly or in the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and other concerned bodies, still do not seem to be able to exercise the degree of control felt necessary on the part of financial experts. That has resulted in many differences of opinion and misunderstandings between the Secretariat and the Member States, but this situation is a serious problem that needs to be addressed more realistically. The current system of control, review, checks and balances will have to be reformed in a manner that will give greater confidence to Member States and, at the same time, will enable the Secretary-General to function better financially.

The other point concerns the regular contributions of Member States based on their respective gross national product. In view of the diverse nature of the Organization's membership, there is no option but to maintain the current methods of financing for the regular budget. But all Member States must live up to their expectations and not create problems to pressure the international Organization.

That situation notwithstanding, the greatest problem is voluntary contributions needed to finance the activities of the United Nations. From a long-term perspective, it would be good to look seriously at the prospects for increasing, even if gradually, forms of independent financing for the United Nations in which national decisions become less relevant. There have already been some proposals on this. A more vigorous pursuit in this direction would serve the international community well. The Secretariat needs to look into this and advise Member States on the course of action that needs to be initiated.

As several speakers before me have expressed, in the reform process to be carried out by the Secretary-General, the question of representation of all Member States in the recruitment process has to be given added emphasis. Where they cannot put forward candidates or have no interest in doing so, then it is a different matter. But we must bear in mind that this is an international Organization, composed of 191 Members, and the character of the United Nations Secretariat and its bodies must and should reflect this reality. Unfortunately, proposals such as these are usually countered by arguments that this results in recruitment of mediocre third world personnel. Yes, there would be cultural differences, varied methods of working, and linguistic and other issues. But the United Nations recruitment process should be such that, leaving aside cultural and linguistic differences, which are obvious in a universal multilateral setting, only qualified persons are recruited whether from developed or developing countries.

I have taken the opportunity to address a few of the many points in the Secretary-General's report. My delegation takes this opportunity to commend Mr. Kofi Annan for the initiatives that he has taken in the reform of the United Nations. We thank him for the positive suggestions made and are confident that the report will be a most useful input in our efforts to bring about necessary reforms in this universal Organization.

Mr. Valdés (Chile)(*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin by expressing our appreciation to the Secretary-General and his colleagues for the report on the reform of the United Nations that we are discussing today. I also wish to express at the outset our resolute support to the proposals submitted to us. We wish also to express our intention to contribute as far as possible to the promotion of vast support for the agenda for change proposed by the Secretary-General and make a contribution to the debate by introducing new ideas and improvements that will add to its success.

In our opinion there are many reasons that make it necessary to give unrestricted support for the effort that the Secretariat is proposing to us. First of all, there is the quality and the very contents of the report, which respond, as pointed out in its introduction, to a new way of working within the United Nations. Of equal importance, we feel, is the fact that the report reflects

requirements and agreements which are of long standing for Member States. This is an excellent example of the possibility for cooperation between Governments and the Secretariat, with a view to revitalizing the Organization.

We also believe that the proposals come from a Secretary-General who has demonstrated, through his outstanding management, a great capacity for administration; conducting with singular skill the implementation of his proposals agreed to in 1997. This ensures that, in observing the process of implementing this report as a joint effort, it will be possible to make the Organization capable of dealing with the international challenges of today — challenges which are probably the most difficult faced by the Organization since it was created.

The proposal to carry out at the United Nations the tasks that are truly important — by providing better service to Member States, by making progress at the same time in joint efforts and by investing resources in priorities — reflects a fortunate combination of substantive, practical and procedural issues, which surely makes the report commensurate with today's requirements.

It is true that the existence of the United Nations has rarely seemed more necessary than today, in view of the great tasks being faced by a globalized humanity. From combating poverty, achieving at least some degree of development for a vast majority of the planet, caring for the environment and fighting HIV/AIDS to preserving international peace and security, the United Nations seems more necessary every day.

However, we cannot disregard the fact that only rarely have the voices from different parts of the world, supported at times by powerful media, been heard as loudly as now, spreading a picture of multilateralism as a futile and wasteful undertaking; only rarely have these voices been so determined to disregard the legitimacy of miltilateralism, denying the need to see mankind as a whole, denying the urgent need to make progress through new institutions, in the task of creating greater cooperation in the international system. Chile understands that supporting the reform of the system is one way, perhaps the most effective way, of providing a clear response to those who believe or act in that way.

We are not disregarding the difficulties involved in promoting processes of change in international institutions. We know that frequently such attempts change run up against political realities that express t legitimate interests of many of their proponents. reality, this has been a recurrent situation in the Unit Nations where, frequently, concrete results achiev are not commensurate with the true needs of t Organization, although they are presented as such.

Therefore, we feel it is urgent to appeal for constructive spirit. We believe that nothing is mo legitimate than to explore the consequences of t proposals made by the Secretary-General, to seek provide information to the whole membership, suggest alternatives or indicate objections. Howeve we believe that any criticism should be introduced wi a constructive spirit, with full respect for the powe that are given to the Secretary-General under t Charter.

We wish to recognize before all else t importance of the fact that the report begins stressing that the Millennium Development Goa constitute the highest task of the Organization. F developing countries, it is extremely important that t Secretary-General persist in the road map and in t reports that measure both the progress and t limitations and failures being experienced on this pa towards overcoming poverty, ignorance and disease.

We also recognize the importance of analyzi the impact of globalization on development. Reduci the risks that it entails for the developing countries is fundamental task, not only in economic and soc terms, but also for ensuring the maintenance, if not t survival, of the values of human rights and democra as well as international security. In this area it necessary that there be a well-informed, frank deba among Member States, and to which the Secretariat c make a relevant contribution. In this connection and other areas related to economic developme interaction with the Bretton Woods institutions is necessity that the report rightly recognizes.

We also feel that of particular interest are t proposals intended to improve various aspects of t relationship between Governments and the Unit Nations system in the field of human rights. Here, it very important to call for the maintenance of the t purposes of the Commission on Human Rights, wh in recent years has been the subject of politi manipulation. Such manipulation is not beneficial

any way to the promotion and protection of human rights.

We acknowledge and appreciate the proposals aimed at improving the system of human rights in the United Nations and support for human rights in every country. We agree with the idea that the Office of the High Commissioner should be strengthened. We also propose that it prepare an annual report on the situation of human rights worldwide. Such a report would make it possible to depoliticize the debate within the Commission and help to facilitate bilateral dialogue on human rights in a more objective framework. Similarly, we believe that the initiatives proposed to reposition the Department of Public Information are relevant because, as the report indicates, public opinion should be an essential basis for strengthening the Organization.

We attach great value to the Secretary-General's suggestions for enhancing efforts to reform the working methods of the General Assembly. The report indicates the need to pursue the process of reform of the intergovernmental organs, deeming it to be a principal aspect of any process to strengthen the Organization. The Secretary-General's comments reiterate many of the points raised in the debates held on this item in the past two sessions of the General Assembly. It is to be recalled that the efforts to revitalize the General Assembly were relaunched at the fifty-first session with the adoption of resolution 51/241, which contains a set of measures to modernize this principal organ of the United Nations.

However, the process of implementing some of those commitments, which was intensified during Mr. Harri Holkeri's presidency of the General Assembly and continued with the greater participation of the membership during the presidency of Mr. Han Seung-soo, is still incomplete in many aspects. Particularly noteworthy among those aspects are the overloaded agenda, the reduction or elimination of duplication of work, and coordination among organs that deal with similar items from different perspectives. We fully support the efforts that you, Sir, are currently making to promote new steps on the path of General Assembly reform and we trust that they are supported by the entire membership.

On a different point, the Economic and Social Council has made progress in the search for functional norms appropriate to the goals and objectives of its current agenda. However, we believe that much ground remains to be covered. In that connection, while the efficient treatment of the agenda has been improved through the convening of various segments, we feel that the relationship between the results achieved by the Council and the work of the Second and Third Committees remains weak.

Furthermore, it would seem necessary to strengthen coordination within the Council, not only with the agencies of the United Nations system, but also in the relationship between them and the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council itself. The report rightly notes that it is also necessary for the General Assembly to clarify its responsibilities to the Economic and Social Council in connection with the integrated follow-up of major conferences of the United Nations.

At the same time, we fully endorse the idea that any reform of the United Nations will be incomplete without reform of the Security Council. We are ready to participate in efforts to resume exploring this issue and the relationship between the three main intergovernmental organs of the Organization.

I cannot conclude without referring briefly to the question of the budget. We feel that the affirmations made in the report are basically accurate. The duplication of tasks and the use of wasteful procedures that seriously hamper the consideration of priorities guiding the preparation of the budget are severe limitations on the functioning of the Organization. We understand that there are possible alternatives to the Secretariat's proposals, but we are interested in pursuing the promotion of a medium-term plan covering a shorter period; a budget that has clear strategic objectives; and an enhanced assessment system. We are prepared to consider in detail the proposals for flexibility in budget management, which we feel would be most constructive since they respond to a modern and updated approach to administration.

The report contains many other proposals that would require a great deal of commentary here. We understand that, with this debate, we are opening up an agenda of work that will require more detailed application. We advocate a resolution that will allow Member States to fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General. We could thus make more tangible our oft-stated intentions of creating an Organization that is adequate to the challenges of the new century.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset to associate myself with the statement made this morning by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his submission of the report in document A/57/387, and for its style, its formal features and its substance. As to the style, the document follows in the tradition launched by the landmark document entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century", prepared on the occasion of the Millennium Summit. Its language is crisp, precise and, at times, even eloquent, and the actions proposed are easy to understand. As to the content, we endorse the general thrust of the report, which builds on the reform proposal produced in 1997 in document A/51/950 and welcomed by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/12.

In this respect, the Secretary-General reminds us once again that, in his opinion, "reform is a process, not an event" (*A/57/387, para. 196*). True to this idea, we find a package of proposals that point, in an incremental fashion, towards a more relevant, efficient and effective Organization with a clear sense of direction in terms of fulfilling the major objectives contained in the Charter. For those who believe in this gradualist but cumulative philosophy, the document will be found to be balanced, totally consistent with the actions undertaken since 1997, and endowed with additional proposals that will move the process forward, perhaps slowly, but surely. For those who prefer bolder changes, the document will no doubt be a disappointment.

My own delegation identifies, in a general manner, with the first group. In other words, we accept that we are embarked on a process that has already yielded important achievements and some shortcomings, and that the majority of the actions that are now being proposed to us are reasonable and consistent with the logic of reform initiated five years ago. In consequence, we subscribe to the actions being proposed, with some nuances that I will refer to presently.

Our only reservation to what was stated, and on which we would have preferred more outspokenness, relates to the inevitable need to reform the United Nations system of governance in tandem with reform of the Secretariat. For understandable reasons, the Secretary-General focuses his proposals on his own sphere of competence, limiting himself to "[venturing] some suggestions" (*para. 14*) on reform of the intergovernmental bodies. However, if we truly wanted to strengthen our Organization, we would have had to add a sixth section to the report, with more detailed proposals regarding how to adapt the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and, especially, the Security Council to a renewed vision of the United Nations for the twenty-first century. After all, nothing prevents the Secretary-General from taking the initiative to make proposals; it will be up to Governments whether or not to accept them.

I will comment briefly on the specific actions proposed, following the sequence of the report. To begin with, we agree that it is necessary to focus our efforts on priority items. Despite the extremely broad mandate of its Charter, the United Nations is no exception to the rule that every organization and every human activity must prioritize its activities. We share the view that the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation provide guidelines. The difficulty lies in the fact that the Millennium Development Goals, looked at individually, result in a wide thematic spread. In other words, if a particular intergovernmental forum wishes to address a specific topic it will undoubtedly be able to relate that topic to an element in the Millennium Development Goals.

But the Secretary-General's report offers modalities on which to base our priorities. The first set of modalities relates to our working methods, and are intended to ensure that we do not spend time on items whose inclusion in our agenda is based not on actual need, but on mere inertia.

The second is in the area of the allocation of resources. This is why we eagerly await what is offered in connection with action 1: a revised programme budget that better reflects the link between priorities and the activities to be undertaken.

Another point relating to section II is that it singles out two thematic areas — human rights and public information — for specific attention. Many will wonder why those particular activities were selected. But we must recognize that many delegations have long criticized productivity in these two thematic areas as being less than optimal. In that connection, we await the implementation of actions 2 to 5, consisting of

steps to be taken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We share the Secretary-General's view that we can do much at the intergovernmental level to strengthen the functioning and credibility of the Commission on Human Rights. We take note of the measures under actions 6 to 10, which, in our view, fall within the mandate of the Secretary-General.

With regard to section III, which deals with the provision of Secretariat services to intergovernmental bodies, my points are the following. It is difficult to disagree with the substance of the measures proposed under actions 11 and 12, regarding reports. These measures nevertheless give rise to two questions. The first has to do with the criteria to be applied in order to "consolidate and regroup recurrent reports" (*para. 92*), who will define them and how they will be applied.

The second query raises the invariably delicate question of the limits of the authority of the Secretary-General vis-à-vis that of the intergovernmental bodies, since the consolidation and reorganization of reports could also affect the manner in which the agenda of the General Assembly is structured. All this calls for careful interaction between the Secretariat and the General Assembly.

In the same vein, and subject to the same reservations, it is difficult to disagree with the observations in paragraphs 100 to 108, which are, in a sense summarized in action 13, and all of which, again, fall within the purview of the Secretary-General. The only possible ingredient missing from the approach to programming and conferences is providing the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management with the discretion and flexibility required to ensure that a debate is not interrupted in its climactic phase by lack of services, for example, by withdrawing the interpreters at the very moment when a consensus is about to be reached at 6 p.m.

Regarding section IV, which aims for better coordination and coherence within the system, most of the measures are nothing more than an extension of policies initiated in 1997, nearly all of which, again, fall within the purview of the Secretary-General. We recognize that defining who does what within an organization as wide-ranging and complex as the United Nations is a challenge of the highest order. We also recognize that, as the Secretary-General points out, the steps taken during the past five years, while going in the right direction, are insufficient. Thus, there can certainly be no objection to carrying forward what has been initiated.

We would add four brief observations. First, paragraph 115 underestimates the potential of the regional commissions to contribute to the strengthening of the United Nations. In fact, the few lines devoted to the regional approach add nothing to what has been said in prior reports. We would have wished to see in the report, at least, the intention to give the regional commissions a more significant role in the provision of technical cooperation, since their presence in the field grants them a certain comparative advantage in doing this, as the Secretary-General himself recognizes in paragraph 123. We therefore look forward with interest to the outcome of action 15.

Secondly, we agree with the Secretary-General's idea that coordination at the level of each country is the most important factor in introducing coherence to the support the Organization provides its Member countries. The establishment of the United Nations Development Group was certainly a very important step in the right direction. We look forward with interest to the proposal enunciated in action 14 to strengthen the Organization's effectiveness in developing countries.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador), Vice-President took the Chair.

Thirdly, we agree with the creation of a new post at the level of Assistant Secretary-General to support policy coherence and management in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. We believe that the consolidation of the three economic departments in existence prior to 1997 into a single entity brought together too many responsibilities — in terms of both volume and variety — in a single administrative unit. Enhancing the Department's capacity to organize its work around specific functions therefore makes considerable sense. The same goes for action 17, which we also support.

Finally in this area, we endorse the idea of pursuing the recent trend to further involve civil society and the business sector in the work of the United Nations. At the same time, we appreciate the practical difficulties that this involves, as well as the resistance it has encountered in some quarters. We therefore support the establishment of the panel of eminent persons referred to in action 19.

As to section V, which deals with the planning and budgeting process, this contains the potentially most far-reaching proposals of the entire report. I must say right away that we generally support those proposals. It is essential that we continue and expand the reforms already initiated in this field, both in the areas of results-based budgeting and human resources. We endorse the Secretary-General's observation that "The goal we should pursue is to make planning and budgeting real strategic instruments in the service of the priorities and the programme of work of the Organization" (*A/57/387, para. 154*). We also endorse the evaluation put forth in paragraphs 155 to 165.

Accordingly, we feel that the proposals contained in actions 21 and 22 deserve our support, although the details require further clarification. Moreover, I would venture to propose that those proposals should be considered at the highest level of representation of our missions, given that their implications extend well beyond the jurisdiction of any of the specialized commissions.

Turning quickly to the last section, I do not wish to extend my remarks any further. Suffice it to say that we agree with the Secretary-General on the need for us to be able to rely on an excellent staff. Many of the measures proposed in this regard fall within the purview of the Secretary-General. We have no major objections to the steps announced. On the other hand, with regard to the recommendations that require the approval of Governments, we have some doubts about action 26. We shall indicate the nature of those doubts in due course. We also support the Secretary-General's proposal for an independent review of the International Civil Service Commission.

I wish to conclude with a general observation on the entire report. The report tends to underestimate the enormous force exerted by inertia as a factor hindering progress towards translating the report's proposals into reality. That inertia exists within the Secretariat and, in a similar or even more pronounced way, in our intergovernmental forums. That inertia is due to intangible elements that are difficult to overcome: habit, vested interests, natural resistance to change, personal and group agendas and many more such elements. This factor is present in any human endeavour and should not surprise us. But the point is that the reforms sought require not only changes in norms, rules and provisions; they also require changing attitudes. It is therefore up to all of us whether or not the forward-looking vision that the Secretary-General presents in his report becomes a reality.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We welcome the Secretary-General's report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387). We commend him on his tireless efforts to reform the Organization. Our thanks also go to the President for arranging this timely plenary debate on such an important question.

China associates itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In addition, I would like to make the following observations with regard to the Secretary-General's report.

First, United Nations reform should attach equal importance to questions pertaining to the maintenance of peace and security and those related to development, the eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development. We support the Secretary-General's proposal to align United Nations activities with such priorities as implementing the Millennium Development Goals and providing an effective response to the challenges of globalization and its impact on development. This is in line with the desires of the Organization's membership, and in particular with those of developing countries. We hope that the Secretary-General will now formulate practical and feasible recommendations, and take effective measures, aimed at the reaching the Goals. That includes, among other things, devoting more resources to development, mobilizing developed countries to increase official development assistance, further opening up markets, eliminating certain trade barriers and ensuring that globalization benefits all countries. All this should be reflected in the United Nations operational arrangements, programmes and resource allocation.

Secondly, China supports reducing the number of Secretariat reports and imposing page limits, while improving their quality, namely, by placing greater emphasis on analysis and recommendations. We also support a reduction in the number of meetings and improving the quality of conference services. We hope that the Secretary-General's recommendations will be taken fully into account when the item of the revitalization of the General Assembly is taken up. We also endorse many other recommendations contained in the report, such as those related to the restructuring of the Department of Public Information, the improved

management of United Nations libraries and enhanced coordination among United Nations bodies.

Thirdly, the financial planning and budgetary process of the United Nations needs streamlining in order to be more in line with reality and real needs and to improve the effectiveness of its work. At the same time, we believe that the Committee for Programme and Coordination should continue to play a special role in the financial planning and budgetary process of the United Nations. When considering that item, we must make sure that decision-making on financial matters ultimately rests with Member States and that the views of the developing Member States are valued.

Fourthly, the proposed inclusion of the human rights question in United Nations development assistance programmes at the country level has caused serious concern among the developing countries. Human rights questions are distinct from those relating to development assistance programmes. We are not in favour of lumping the two together. China supports United Nations activities that promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. But human rights programmes must be suited to the specific conditions of the countries concerned. Full importance must be attached to the realization of the right to development and the views of Governments concerned must be respected.

Fifthly, we support the establishment of a panel of eminent persons to review the relationship between the United Nations and civil society and to offer practical recommendations for improved modalities of interaction. In conducting such a review, the panel should bear in mind the need to support and improve relations between civil society and the United Nations, squarely face the problems that have emerged and widely solicit the views of the membership.

Sixthly, all States have a vital stake in United Nations reform and they should be assured of equal participation in reform-related deliberations and consultations. The General Assembly could consider adoption at this session of a draft resolution containing elements acceptable to all, with a view to maintaining the momentum of reforms now under way.

Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria): At the Millennium Summit, our leaders pledged to make the United Nations a more effective institution for the promotion of world peace and sustainable development. They were conscious of the potential and weaknesses of the Organization when they issued their solemn Declaration. In essence, the Millennium Declaration was a reaffirmation of our leaders' faith in the efficacy and relevance of the United Nations in protecting humanity from self-destruction.

In an ever-changing world full of challenges, the United Nations remains the only credible multilateral institution that guarantees universality, equality, peace and the prosperity of States. Some of the challenges that confront us today, complex yet urgent, were inconceivable 50 years ago. The challenges can only be met through a revitalized and strengthened United Nations.

It was for that reason that, five years ago, our Organization embarked on a process of reform. Since then, the world community has come to expect more far-reaching changes within the United Nations and its constituent bodies. Accountability, transparency, consistency and inclusiveness, as well as efficiency and effectiveness, remain the focal principles behind the reforms. As the United Nations continues on that track, it should place the needs of its Member States above everything else, while the quality of its services, provided through the Secretariat, should be of a professional standard comparable to none.

My delegation associates itself with the views expressed earlier by the chairs of the African Group, the Movement of the Non-Aligned Countries and the African Union, as well as the Group of 77 and China, but it would, nonetheless, like to specifically address the following issues contained in the report.

Regarding peacekeeping efforts, Nigeria notes the determined efforts of the Secretary-General to press on with the revitalization of the United Nations. His efforts are beginning to yield dividends. The reorganization and enhancement of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has resulted in the improvement of the capacity of the United Nations to deploy and manage complex peacekeeping and peace-building operations. In that regard, Sierra Leone is a success story, where the United Nations effectively took over peacekeeping operations from the Monitoring Group of the Economic Community of West African States and succeeded in the restoration of normalcy after a bitter conflict and civil war. The peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola are further proof of the results and benefits of the reforms. While acknowledging those modest

achievements, we must not forget the painful lessons of Rwanda in 1994, when the United Nations developed cold feet and allowed mindless acts of the most grotesque form of genocide to go unchallenged.

Concerning General Assembly reform, the Assembly, as the highest legislative organ of the United Nations, needs to maintain its universality. Any reform in the United Nations must seek to strengthen that unique organ, rather than weaken it. Nigeria applauds the modest achievements recorded so far in the revitalization process. It is our view that, although the streamlining of the activities of the Assembly — especially with respect to meetings, clustering of agenda items, early election of the Assembly President and Main Committee Chairmen — has proven useful, a lot still needs to be done, particularly with regard to the implementation of resolutions and decisions of the Assembly. As we all know, the Assembly is the main deliberative and legislative organ of the United Nations. For that reason, it should be strengthened in order for it to assume a greater decision-making role within the Organization, to give its Members more say and to preserve multilateralism.

With regard to enhancing the Economic and Social Council, we agree with the view of the Secretary-General on globalization. It poses serious challenges to mankind. While we do not doubt the potentials inherent in globalization, we are gravely concerned about its effects and consequences. We are witnesses to the ever-widening divide between the rich and poor countries and between different regions in an ever-shrinking world. Living as we do in a world governed by cyber-technology, there is an urgent need to find ways to make globalization more beneficial for the greater majority of humanity. We believe that the United Nations can play a leading role in that direction. The Organization must also show more leadership in helping find durable solutions to developmental problems such as external debt, market access, technology transfer, human development and capacity-building for developing countries. It is necessary to keep those issues on the priority list of a revitalized and strengthened United Nations system.

Another area where the United Nations can be and is already playing a commendable role is in building strong partnerships. We note the partnership between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations, as well as non-State actors such as civil society organizations, voluntary agencies, interest groups and philanthropic foundations, universities and individuals. This deliberate outreach strategy has sensitized the peoples of the world to the objectives of the United Nations and has, in turn, contributed to success in monitoring international peace and security.

In the wake of the Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, partnership initiatives would form part of the implementation strategies of national Governments in fulfilling their commitments. Thus, the United Nations should position itself to monitor and to follow up on the partnerships as they unfold around the world. In particular, the Economic and Social Council must elaborate an effective strategy to follow up on international conferences without necessarily whittling away at the role of its subsidiary bodies.

With respect to human rights, Nigeria endorses the view that the United Nations provides a unique institutional framework to develop and promote human rights, norms and practices, while respecting national and cultural diversities. We believe that the promotion and protection of human rights is necessary for the realization of the United Nations vision of a just and peaceful world. Nigeria therefore supports the Secretary-General's view that the building of strong human rights institutions at the national level is the only way to ensure the protection and advancement of basic human rights.

With respect to the special needs of Africa, we commend the Secretary-General for keeping alive the spirit of the Millennium Declaration, which recognizes Africa's special needs. In this regard, we note the proposal to assign to the Secretary-General's Advisor for Special Assignments in Africa the responsibilities of coordinating and guiding reports and input on Africa-related matters and on Least Developed Countries through the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and Least Developed Countries (OSCAL). However, we would expect the Secretary-General to elaborate further on how the United Nations would sensitize and mobilize system-wide support, as well as mobilize resources for the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In our opinion, the success and sustenance of NEPAD should be given full and unequivocal attention by the United Nations system, especially now that NEPAD has become the overall policy framework

within which the United Nations and the international community will channel support for Africa.

With respect to allocating resources, Nigeria welcomes the Secretary-General's efforts aimed at streamlining the planning and budgeting system. The need for creating real strategic instruments and achieving greater effectiveness should, however, not preclude the retention of priorities contained in the Millennium Assembly Goals, enunciated in the medium-term plan and other legislative mandates. Furthermore, adequate programme planning, evaluation and implementation monitoring should be enhanced through a well-articulated intergovernmental process. In that regard, the Committee for Programme and Coordination should be encouraged to fine-tune its working methods to enhance its performance.

We also welcome the Secretary-General's bold initiative on planning, managing meetings and documentation, provided such actions do not undermine the ability of Member States to take well-informed decisions and that hard copies will remain available to all Member States, as not all countries are able to take full advantage of electronic technology.

Nigeria is not adverse to the desirability of giving the Secretary-General the necessary prerogative to reallocate human and material resources of the United Nations as he deems appropriate. To do otherwise would undermine his capacity to deliver results. However, we believe that such authorization should be done in relation to the allocation of funds and resources for social and economic programmes and projects, in accordance with the proper mechanisms of accountability and monitoring.

On human resource management, Nigeria supports the idea of deserving staff being encouraged to attain their career objectives. We therefore support the promotion of General Service staff to the Professional category, and we call upon the Secretary-General to fully explore ways to increase the number of General Service or eligible posts among those not subject to geographical distribution.

With respect to Security Council reform, as we have stated on previous occasions, Nigeria believes that the Security Council needs to be reformed, expanded and made more representative. While we note some improvement in its working methods and regular consultations with non-members, external actors and troop-contributing countries, we still hold the view that the Council needs to be expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. We commend the Council's role in conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building, and we pledge our support in those efforts.

Finally, we thank the Secretary-General for his report, especially the strategies articulated in it for revitalizing the Organization. Nigeria will continue to support all efforts to enable the United Nations to live up to the expectation of its Member States.

Mr. Stagno (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to thank the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General for the preparation and presentation of the report on the strengthening of the United Nations (A/57/387 and Corr.1).

Without any doubt, 57 years after its creation, the United Nations requires thorough reform. The Organization has grown enormously over that long period of time. Its functions have been expanded. It has explored to the fullest extent the possibilities enshrined in its Charter. It has developed innumerable programmes and new mandates. It has undertaken additional obligations, and numerous institutional mechanisms have been created to respond to the new demands. Similarly, many programmes have been abandoned or have lost their relevance. Many mandates have been overtaken by the quick pace of history. Many departments have lost their raison d'être, while others that are still necessary have lost the political support of the international community.

For more than half a century, the Organization has been the sounding board for various conflicts and the events of international politics. Its organizational structure and budget reflect the scars of recent history. Some of its functions and tasks no longer correspond to the current needs of humankind, while others reflect the ideological struggles and political concepts of times gone by.

The Organization's growth has been disorderly. It has lacked a strategic vision and a unified conceptual framework to guide that growth. The Organization has survived, and it has adapted. But we cannot say that it has learned or that it has evolved. In this sense, my delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative to launch a review process in order to increase the Organization's efficiency and give a new impetus to its activities.

When we consider the reform and strengthening process, we must keep in mind the particular nature of the Organization. The United Nations is not a private corporation seeking financial gains, but a public institution at the service of the Member States composing it and the people those Members represent. Unquestionably, some reforms that would make sense from a purely administrative point of view are not compatible with the political demands on the Organization. Any reform of the Organization must be designed to improve the quality of services provided to the Member States and to implement faithfully their legislative mandates. In this context, my delegation welcomes the proposals embodied in the Secretary-General's report as a first step in a process of dialog between the Secretariat and Member States to decide, in due time, which measures it will be appropriate to implement in order to strengthen the Organization. However, we are fully aware that this process requires a detailed and careful consideration of the proposals embodied in the report by all the competent intergovernmental bodies.

For this reason we do not think it appropriate to endorse any of the proposals without having first considered all their operational and budgetary implications. Similarly, we would be concerned by the unilateral implementation of these measures by the Secretariat without having an express mandate from Member States. Furthermore, we wonder what the impact of these measures will be on the existing legislative mandates duly adopted by the Member States.

Clearly, we welcome the Secretary-General's intention to give priority to those activities that promote the attainment of the goals enshrined in the Millennium Declaration and in the plans of action of the most recent global summits. However, the adoption of a new list of priorities should not lead the Secretariat automatically to discard the mandates adopted by the principal intergovernmental bodies of the Organization. From a constitutional standpoint, the General Assembly must approve, expressly and in a detailed fashion, the new priorities and the changes to the existing mandates. The possible adoption of limits or sunset provisions, suggested in paragraph 44 of the report (document A/57/387), is a prerogative that the intergovernmental bodies have yet to exercise.

My delegation finds that some of the proposed measures are timely. We agree with the Secretary-General that it is necessary to improve the working mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights to make it more effective. Similarly, we welcome his intention to study ways to rationalize the presentation of national reports to the human rights treaty bodies. We value his intention to improve the coordination among the various organs within the system as well as his efforts to give more incentives and to rejuvenate the Organization's staff with a view to providing better service to the Member States.

Nevertheless, we have some doubts regarding other recommendations. The proposals to make more flexible the transfer of resources and staff, up to 10 per cent of the budget, and to give greater authority to programme managers to oversee the funds assigned to them seem contrary to the best practices in the management of public funds and would require substantial oversight and evaluation measures. Moreover, these measures would jeopardize the implementation of the mandates approved by intergovernmental bodies. It could be asked, for instance, what is currently happening to the funds assigned to the preparation of the *Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs*. We have heard that those funds are informally reassigned to other programmes, ignoring the express mandate of Member States to update it. It is therefore not surprising that there are delays in its publication. My delegation supports the strengthening of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, as well as the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

The suggestion to reduce the number of meetings and reports is somewhat simplistic. The meetings currently held and the reports currently produced respond to the requirements of the various intergovernmental organs. Therefore, the organ in question must approve any reduction, after considering each particular case. As a consequence, we cannot accept the concept of discretion as proposed in paragraph 96 of the report. True reform should, in fact, ensure that the reports provide the most updated data and contain greater substantive analysis.

The suggestion to combine the management of conferences and Secretariat services under the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management ignores the operational and technical need of the various bodies. Nobody has proposed, for instance, to unify the Secretariat of the Security Council with that of the General Assembly because it

would jeopardize the quality of the services provided. Similarly, the technical secretariat of the various committees should not be combined under the same Department without guaranteeing the continuity and quality of the services provided.

We view with interest the proposal to create an alliance with non-governmental organizations and the private sector. However, this task requires great caution. The Organization should be open to all such entities, allowing the expression of various positions and viewpoints. We should not, however, allow the private agenda of any individual non-governmental organization to usurp the agenda of the United Nations. Moreover, we should emphasize that those entities cannot be substitutes for democratically elected Governments. Only representative Governments with a clear democratic mandate represent their peoples legitimately.

From a procedural standpoint my delegation is in favor of the creation of an open-ended working group to consider the main proposals of the report, while the Main Committees of the General Assembly consider those recommendations that fall within their competence. In particular, we would like to receive a detailed analysis of these proposals from the ACABQ and to know the budgetary impact of each of them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now invite the representative of the Russian Federation to take the floor.

Mr. Gatilov (Russia)(*spoke in Russian*): Russia welcomes the Secretary-General's report, "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387) which, based on the recent progress in past years, offers a package to enhance the efficiency of the United Nations. We share those views and recommendations that provide for practical steps to further reform the United Nations and enhance its capacity to respond to global challenges.

In this regard, we support the concept of strengthened coordination within the United Nations system and interaction among its key components. We believe that the efforts to achieve this goal should focus on formulating a consolidated response to new challenges and threats, primarily those posed by the international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The recent tragic events, particularly in Indonesia and Moscow, demonstrated once again to the world the unprecedented cruelty of terrorists who sow death and destruction and their readiness to sacrifice lives of innocent people. Effective counter-terrorism cannot be successful without concerted efforts of the entire international community and a special role in this respect that should be played by the United Nations.

We share the Secretary-General's positive assessment of the efforts within the United Nations to improve the peacekeeping activities of the Organization, his desire to put particular emphasis on developing United Nations anti-crisis mechanisms to conduct multifunctional peacekeeping operations and effective division of labour between the United Nations and regional organizations.

We acknowledge the need to strengthen the role of the General Assembly, in particular by rationalizing its agenda. We share the view that the reform of the Security Council should not lead just to an increase in its membership, since the success of the Security Council's work depends, to no small degree, on its ability to take prompt and effective decisions. In any case, the broadest possible agreement on Security Council reform should be sought without counter-productive haste.

We believe that it would be more logical to codify the measures taken by the Council to improve its working methods and procedures within the framework of the overall Security Council reform package at a more advanced stage in this process. Referring to conflict prevention and settlement, the Secretary-General is right to highlight the need to coordinate, as needed, interaction between the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and to clearly define the roles of the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations Secretariat.

The improvement of the United Nations human rights-related activities identified in the report is a top priority. The actions proposed in this area are balanced and realistic, especially those aimed at streamlining procedures for reporting on the part of Governments on the implementation of all international human-rights treaties and at improving special procedures with regard to human rights.

We commend the Secretary-General's appeal to depoliticize and make more effective the work of the Commission on Human Rights. We believe that the fulfilment of the tasks assigned to the United Nations

High Commissioner for Human Rights will lead to enhanced effectiveness of the bodies established by human-rights treaties and system of special procedures on human rights. It is important to ensure that relevant recommendations on the part of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights are made in close cooperation with all States concerned, fully taking into account their remarks and proposals, and that the programmes on strengthening the human rights-related actions at the country level are aimed at helping countries develop their capabilities, particularly in the protection of human rights.

In the economic field, we support the proposal to single out globalization as a key area, so as to seize the opportunities it offers in international trade and in attracting foreign investment. We approve of the measures to re-enforce the role of the Economic and Social Council and deepen its dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, including in the format of annual meetings between them and the United Nations.

We believe it would make sense to have a clearer division of responsibilities among the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions in the social and economic area with a view to coordinating efforts to implement decisions of the United Nations conferences and summits. We support the optimization of the agenda and working methods of the Second Committee, as well as measures to consolidate the reporting on social and economic issues, including the identification of crosscutting themes relevant to both the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly.

We welcome the strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and private sector, including the proposal to create to this end a Partnerships Office. At the same time, we are not absolutely sure whether it is necessary to strengthen the Secretariat's planning machinery in the social and economic sectors. We think that the existing divisions in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs cope with these issues quite well. We also wish to point out that the report says nothing about supporting countries with economies in transition, although this subject is important given the specific nature of the social and economic problems these countries face.

As regards the interaction between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, we welcome the Secretary-General's intention to establish a panel of eminent persons to review the relationship between the United Nations and civil society and offer practical recommendations in this regard. We wish to state that Russia is ready to nominate a highly qualified candidate to work on this panel.

We also took note of the Secretary-General's proposal to reform the public information system in several ways simultaneously: organizational change in the Department of the Secretariat, optimization of United Nations publications, restructuring United Nations Information Centres through their consolidation into regional hubs, starting with Western European countries.

However, we have serious doubts about the idea of integrating the United Nations libraries under the umbrella of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in New York and assigning it the function of policy setting and coordinating the work in this area of the Organization's activities. To be perfectly frank, this kind of rigid centralization will only harm the efficiency of library services designed for the benefit of the Member States and weaken the United Nations role in providing these services to other international organizations, non-governmental institutions and the public. Local specificity, which is important for the fruitful use of these libraries, would be lost. Therefore, we deem it necessary to study this proposal in all its aspects and in detail, first of all from the standpoint of the consequences implied in these changes.

As for the report's section on improving conference services, our assumption is that the set of action proposed will be considered during the discussion of the annual resolution of the General Assembly on the pattern of conferences. At this stage we wish to stress the importance of preserving and strengthening the existing United Nations principles of conference services and the division of authority and functions between the corresponding departments in New York and the United Nations offices in Vienna, Geneva and Nairobi in this area.

It was somewhat unexpected for us to see in some sections of the new Secretary-General's report on reforms a trend towards centralizing functions, powers and lines of authority in the areas of conference services and public information. Furthermore, Action 32 and the section on further efforts to improve management speak of developing, not curtailing, the

concept of the delegation of authority. Besides that, "the premise that giving managers more authority and responsibility for decision-making is essential ... to the improvement of the management of human and financial resources" (A/55/270, para. 1) was used as a basis for the 1997 reform proposals — this is a quotation from the 2000 Secretary-General's report "Accountability and responsibility" (A/55/270). We believe that the reforms conducted in the United Nations should be consistent here too.

We welcome the intention of the Secretary-General to submit a carefully revised programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 to reflect new priorities of the Organization. It is important that its limited resources be apportioned in such a way as to make it possible to identify outdated and ineffective programmes and activities. In this regard, we look forward to specific proposals from the Secretary-General.

We would also like to note that the problem of shortcomings in the programming and budgeting process has been correctly identified in the report and, indeed, specific steps should be worked out to remove them. In this context, the Secretary-General proposes a number of drastic changes — more strategic budget with supplementary details provided separately; medium-term plans covering two rather than four years combined with the budget outline; and concentration of intergovernmental review of plans and budgets in the Fifth Committee. All of this need to be carefully studied, along with the proposal to give him authority to reallocate up to ten percent of budget resources.

In this connection, we believe it is important to submit additional and more detailed material on these issues to the Fifth Committee through the Advisory Committee for Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

We regret to note that the part of the report dedicated to personnel questions does not contain long-awaited proposals for radical reform of the United Nations contractual system and improvement of the performance evaluation system. We reaffirm that the key to effective reform of human resources management lies in complete abandonment of the system of permanent contracts and a switch to non-career service, which would make it possible to shift human resources flexibly and efficiently.

The ideas contained in the report of the Secretary-General on transforming human resources policy — for example, developing new approaches to staff recruitment and compensation in field locations and increasing departure packages and resources for staff retraining — should be viewed from the perspective of their additional financial implications. We cannot agree with the conclusion that the United Nations needs a more competitive system of pay and benefits. We regard the review of the system being conducted by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) as a purely creative quest for possibilities to enhance the efficiency of work of the Secretariat.

In order to enable Member States to take a decision on the proposed reform package, an effective working mechanism should be established, such as informal plenary consultations of the General Assembly conducted by its President. Within such a mechanism it would be possible to agree upon a draft resolution on the Secretary-General's reform proposals that would provide significant impetus to further reform of the Organization. Russia, for its part, is prepared to participate actively and constructively in such consultations.

Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): Permit me to begin by associating my delegation with the statements made on behalf of the African Group by the Permanent Representative of Egypt, in his capacity as its Chairman for the month of October, and by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report (A/57/387), entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change," containing 36 actions. We hope that the outcome of the consideration of these second-generation reform initiatives, at this high level, will help unleash a new burst of improvements to the management culture of the United Nations and enhance the effectiveness with which the Organization implements mandates. I also hope it will help free the Secretary-General from the tired notion that additional budgetary resources cannot be provided by Member States for the increasing mandates, as capacity exists for further efficiency gains.

In this regard, we note that while some of the actions are exploratory in nature and will require further study before consideration at a later stage, a number of them have immediate effect upon approval.

We also distinguish between proposals that lie well within the purview of the Secretary-General and those for which intergovernmental approval is required.

I intend during this intervention to speak to various actions that have been recommended by the Secretary-General. However, before doing that, let me indicate that my delegation has taken note of the Secretary-General's observations on the additional work required on issues such as the revitalization of the General Assembly, the enhancement of the Economic and Social Council and the process of Security Council reform. We recognize that those matters lie within our purview as Member States, and my delegation accordingly commits itself to work in concert with other delegations to that end also.

In respect of action 1, which is intended to bring the current programme budget in line with the priorities agreed to at the Millennium Assembly, let me indicate that Ghana affirms its support for that proposed action. In our view, the intention is consistent with the results-based budgeting system, which is results-oriented and should reflect the priorities of the United Nations. My delegation further believes that since the medium-term plan, which forms a set of priority issues over the medium term, is not supposed to be static and is indeed subject to review every two years, the action being contemplated should be undertaken within the existing mechanism, and should be aimed at reflecting not only the priorities agreed to in the Millennium Declaration, but also the implementation mechanisms derived from follow-up meetings, such as the Monterrey Consensus, the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Programme of Action of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, and others.

The proposals of the Secretary-General in actions 2 to 5, concerning measures to strengthen human rights, are laudable, and my delegation is in a position to endorse the proposals for implementation. It is our belief that universal principles of human rights require effective national action. Thus, countries that need assistance should be supported in developing national capacities on the standards and norms of internationally agreed human rights and fundamental freedoms. My delegation is, however, uncomfortable with the suggestion that human rights be integrated into the country programmes of the World Bank, as this could shift focus away from the core issue of development financing. In any event, such an action would require further study and assessment.

My delegation welcomes the intention of action 3 to streamline the reporting procedures under the treaty bodies on human rights. The dearth of reports submitted by Member States reflects the burden of reporting and undermines efforts towards the effective promotion of human rights. We look forward to the consultations that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights would carry out with treaty bodies in that regard, and to his subsequent report.

Ghana has always viewed as important the role of the special procedures in the promotion and protection of international human rights. We therefore support efforts to enhance the effectiveness of that mechanism, in ways that would cause the current controversies about the outcome of the work of special procedures to abate, by avoiding actions that are perceived as arbitrary and by the formulation of uniform guidelines or rules of procedure.

In all this, and with an eye for the effective management of programme activities, we note that a reliable source of funding establishes a predictable basis for long-term planning. We therefore look forward to the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, which we hope will focus on ways of strengthening the fund-raising activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, freeing it of the restrictive conditionalities that some donors tie to funding activities, which, in some measure, has led to the fragmentation of programme activities.

The importance of the public information function of the work of the United Nations is better appreciated when one realizes that the United Nations has a relationship not merely with Governments of Member States, but with all the peoples of the world, most of whom look up to this Organization with great expectations. My delegation is therefore able to support the Secretary-General's intention to restructure the Department of Pubic Information in ways that can increase its effectiveness as the mouthpiece of the United Nations. We also support the evaluation activity to be carried out by the Office of Internal Oversight Services over a three-year period, as this can provide a scientific and objective basis for ascertaining the impact and cost-effectiveness of various United

Nations media outputs. We, however, urge that the impact analysis of the output of the Department of Public Information should cover all relevant concerns, including the needs of societies and peoples in all their wide diversity, and their capacities to access the media outputs.

Ghana supports the concept of regional hubs, starting with the consolidation of the 13 information centres in Western Europe, as it holds the potential to free resources from high-cost but low-impact areas for allocation to other strategic locations. We caution, however, that in Africa, for instance, the wide expanse of the region and the particular subregional concerns may require subregional hubs to be considered as an alternative option.

My delegation can also endorse implementation of action 9, aimed at improving the management of United Nations libraries, and stressing the need to adhere to the stated pledge that further movement towards the enhanced use of an electronic documentation and distribution system would not in any way constrain the access of less capable end users, including permanent missions, to hard-copy versions of documents and collections.

Regarding improvements to publications, however, my delegation is in a position to endorse implementation of action 10, except sub-action (d), which calls for the cessation of the publication by the United Nations of the *Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs*. My delegation believes that the difficulties associated with clearing the backlog of volumes of the *Repertory* and the problems related to the internal capacity to publish should not excuse the existing obligation in that regard. Ghana commends the efforts of the Office of Legal Affairs to establish a web site for an electronic version of the *Repertory*. We call for equal treatment of the *Repertory* and the *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council*, and we urge that exhaustive consideration be given to all options, including a previous proposal of the Office of Internal Oversight Services for a central *Repertory* section as well as the establishment and maintenance of a trust fund to provide dedicated resources that can fund posts on a long-term basis to facilitate the preparation of volumes for publication.

The Secretary-General's proposals relating to actions 11 to 13 are interesting but will require further consideration, as they have more direct impact on the negotiating capacity of Member States. Ghana could, however, endorse implementation of action 11, which aims to improve reporting, subject to the approval by the General Assembly, of clearly defined criteria to guide the process. It is our view that the drive for brevity should not obscure our clear need for information based on all the available and relevant facts concerning a particular matter. In addition, even as my delegation notes the challenges posed by action 12, we can commit to working with other delegations on the establishment of a mechanism to review the continuing need and the frequency of recurring reporting requirements.

With regard to action 13, Ghana can support the Secretary-General's intention to strengthen the capacity of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management to deliver cost-effective meetings and conference services, through, inter alia, enhanced utilization of globally available United Nations resources. My delegation, however, notes the relationship between the proposals contained in the report under discussion and the additional measures of document A/57/289. It is not our expectation that approval granted with respect to the current action would necessarily extend to the measures contained in that document.

An indication of the effectiveness of the United Nations is, more often than not, reflected by the manner in which it is able to galvanize its rich reservoir of knowledge and skills and to bring them to bear on any given issue. Today, the range of issues of concern to Member States has increased, and their resolution is ever so critical to the well-being of so many. Ghana, therefore, supports further implementation of measures to strengthen the effectiveness of the presence of the United Nations in developing countries through enhanced coordination mechanisms, which must embrace country ownership and leadership. We also look forward to the document to be published in September 2003 clarifying roles and responsibilities in the area of technical cooperation.

Actions 16 and 17, concerning the envisaged restructuring of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, are welcome, and we look forward to additional information on the value-added role anticipated by the proposed post of a third Assistant Secretary-General. Ghana endorses implementation of action 17 and advocates that the policy planning unit be an adjunct to the Office of the Under-Secretary-

General, which should lead policy development within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in a consistent and coherent manner.

The proposed restructuring of the Office of the Adviser for Special Assignments in Africa is significant, as it seeks to consolidate into a single high-profile office the currently scattered units dealing solely with issues related to Africa. We trust that such a restructuring, which would reflect the priority of Africa in the medium-term plan, would assume the required permanency in so far as Africa continues to be a priority consideration of the Assembly. In that respect, we envisage that the funding mechanism for that office may require an adjustment of its current allocation under special political missions. Furthermore, my delegation hopes that the wording of action 18, which defines the scope of the functions of the Office of the Adviser solely in terms of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, was merely inadvertent and not a deliberate decision to restrict its role to the General Assembly while excluding the Security Council. Other forums, such as the Economic and Social Council, exist and are important to the interests of Africa.

In the light of the important contributions that civil society groups and the private sector can make to the achievement of some of the core objectives of the United Nations, Ghana is in a position to endorse actions 19 and 20 for implementation, with the understanding that such implementation would proceed in conformity with existing legislative requirements and that substantive proposals to that end would bear in mind the international character of the United Nations and would be consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter.

With regard to actions 21 to 23, my delegation views as positive the commitment to review on a continuous basis the process for allocating resources. We are ready to consider each proposed action on its own merit. We believe it is necessary, however, to affirm our support for the medium-term plan as it currently exists and to express our doubts as to the usefulness of replacing it with a short-term plan, which the biennial budget represents. As the strategic document for envisioning the objectives of the Organization, we believe that the medium-term plan — which guides the focus of implementation of the prioritized objectives that are translated into biennial budgets — should be driven by all stakeholders, including the relevant substantive Main Committees and the Secretariat. Its development should originate from and be endorsed by the relevant M Committees.

My delegation can, however, support a bu outline that is prepared to reflect the four- medium-term plan, but only with the understan that, whereas the first two years would be firm outl and subject to approval by the General Assembly, remaining two years would serve only as indica outlines of future resource requirements. Ghana c also consider supporting a shorter, but adequate more strategic, budget if the supplementary detail be provided separately were easily accessible and not detract from our capacity to take well-infor decisions.

Regarding the strengthening of the systen evaluation and monitoring, my delegation sees tha an integral part of the results-based budgeting sy and understands that, in order to operate a flex system up front, accountability mechanisms w have to be strong downstream. We therefore forward to the proposals concerning evaluation monitoring, particularly an evaluation system in w financial performance and programme implementa would be reviewed in an integrated manner, to ga better appreciation of what results are being achi and at what cost, and to help answer questions suc whether a lack of funding accounts for the achievement of a set objective.

We look forward to further clarifications action 22, and we intend to discuss with delegations how the objective to consolidate within Fifth Committee all aspects of the budget deci making process will be pursued, if its merits wa that. We equally look forward to the new forma peacekeeping budgets that the Secretary-Ge intends to develop, consistent, we hope, with legislative requirement for a more results-orie budgeting format that better justifies the allocatio resources.

Ghana supports action 25, aimed at enhan staff mobility across the United Nations system. would, however, like to stress that mobility shoul promoted, not merely as a solution to sta constraints in some duty stations, but also, among things, as a means to developing the experi necessary to shape the views of senior professio We can also support action 26, which proposes li

the restrictions on the numbers of General Service staff eligible for promotion to the Professional category, with the understanding that the proposed increase of the annual quota of P-2 posts available for successful General Service examinations candidates would not in any way distort the prime consideration that the composition of the Professional grades of staff of the United Nations should reflect fairly the broad geographical distribution of Member States.

Ghana could be in a position to support action 27, concerning proposed changes to the functions and the career prospects of the General Service staff, and action 28, which would change the status of all employees of the United Nations Secretariat to international civil servants. However, we seek further clarification as to how they would affect the Fleming principle and its cost-saving elements.

My delegation is also in a position to support the flexible working arrangements proposed in action 29, insofar as it relates only to existing staff and does not become a consideration in the decision to employ new staff. The United Nations is a universal Organization and, as a result, nationals of all countries, developing and developed, should have equal opportunity to work for it.

Finally, my delegation is in a position to endorse actions 30 to 36, subject to a few clarifications which we will pursue during the informal consultations on the matter. Let me, however, indicate that we look forward to the active engagement of the Ombudsman in the resolution of disputes between management and staff. We hope that the Office will be given the necessary support to enable it fulfil its intended purpose.

I would like to conclude by reiterating my delegation's support for these actions submitted by the Secretary-General and to indicate our commitment to working with other delegations on them.

Mr. Takahashi (Japan): The advancement of globalization has resulted in unprecedented opportunities for exchanges and greater mutual understanding among people of different cultures. Indeed, globalization has brought benefits to many. At the same time, we recognize that there are many people who have not benefited from globalization and who are leading unfulfilling lives. Under these circumstances, there are many situations in which existing rules governing human activities that cross national borders are inadequate. The States Members of the United Nations must summon the wisdom to revitalize the functions of the Organization and ensure that it is able to respond to the challenges of the present era. The first step towards this goal is to ensure the accountability of the United Nations itself and to reform it by setting clear agendas. The Government of Japan expresses its appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his initiative in promoting United Nations reform.

Let me begin by offering Japan's views and expectations with respect to the Secretary-General's reform proposal.

First, if a General Assembly resolution is adopted at an early stage to provide guidance and momentum for reform as a whole, as recommended in the report of the Secretary-General, Japan would support such a resolution. Secondly, Japan encourages the Secretary-General to expeditiously implement those elements of reform that are solely under his authority and in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions already adopted. Thirdly, once a reform is introduced, we, the Member States, should follow up the implementation process in an appropriate and timely manner and verify the results.

Now, I would like to convey Japan's views on several areas covered in the Secretary-General's report. The Government of Japan attaches particular importance to the following four points.

First, Japan considers that it is crucial for the United Nations to realign its programmes according to the new agenda defined through the Millennium Declaration and through major global conferences. This programme review should be reflected in the 2004-2005 regular budget of the United Nations. Clear priority-setting and the identification of offset savings should be undertaken in reviewing the budgeting and planning process for enhanced flexibility and effectiveness. The explanation of this point by Deputy Secretary-General Fréchette last week was encouraging.

We believe it is essential in this regard to allocate resources to high-priority activities by redeploying resources from low-priority and obsolete activities. The Government of Japan fully expects that the Secretary-General will identify and propose activities that could be discontinued or terminated. This would have further importance in light of the possible increase in the current budget. If these efforts do not succeed and, as a result, the size of the United Nations budget continues

to expand, Japan, which contributes one fifth of the regular budget, will be in a difficult position in terms of its accountability to its taxpayers.

Let me explain the budgetary process of the Japanese Government. In this process, the director of each section of Japan's ministries plays an important role in setting priorities and specifying activities to be scrapped due to budgetary constraints. Japanese taxpayers certainly expect a similar course to be followed in the budgetary process of the United Nations. We therefore support the initiative for sunset provisions proposed in the report of the Secretary-General.

Secondly, the Government of Japan wishes to underline the importance of improving the management of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and looks forward to a concrete and effective proposal from the High Commissioner to this end. The OHCHR should make every effort to promote collaboration with other United Nations organs, institutes and specialized agencies, while ensuring consistency in their respective mandates and upholding the fundamental concepts of human rights in the international community.

Thirdly, Japan attaches particular importance to the realization of the principle of equitable geographical distribution with regard to the Secretariat staff. In order to resolve the issue of non-representation or under-representation, Japan expects the Secretary-General to develop a programme and set specific targets for achieving equitable geographical distribution, as requested by resolution 55/258. The report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform, in document A/57/293, does not fully address this request, and we look forward to a full report during the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

With regard to the proposal for lifting the restrictions on the number of General Service staff eligible for promotion to the Professional category, Japan does not think that opportunities for such promotions should be ensured by increasing the ratio of recruitment from the General Service to the Professional category. Rather, Japan considers it appropriate to increase opportunities for recruitment to the Professional level through national competitive examinations and the General Service-to-Professional category examinations by changing the top-heavy post structure of the Secretariat to a structure that is m pyramid-shaped, as mentioned in resolution 51/241 reaffirmed in resolution 56/253.

Fourthly, from the viewpoint of increasing efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations, Government of Japan expects further coordination the field among the United Nations system and ot players, and the streamlining of reports and confere management.

We welcome the Secretary-General's focus United Nations efforts in the field of development. Government of Japan hopes to deepen the discuss regarding the integrated and coordinated follow-up series of major international conferences in the fiel development, including the International Confere on Financing for Development and the World Sum on Sustainable Development, and on how to realize goals of such conferences. The Government of Ja expects that the deliberations which are taking pl under other agenda items will contribute to the ref of the United Nations as a whole.

Last but not least, I would like to comment on reform of the Security Council. The present report d not cover the necessary changes within internatio intergovernmental organs, such as the reform of Security Council, that a Working Group has b examining. This is, however, a very important tas strengthening the United Nations. As the Secret General noted in paragraph 20 of his report (docum A/57/387), "no reform of the United Nations would complete without reform of the Security Council".

It is both possible and necessary to enlarge Security Council without diminishing its effectiven Next year, the debate on Security Council reform enter its tenth year. The Government of Japan belie that, as the first practical step, we should now fo our discussion on such questions as the number of s on an enlarged Security Council. Japan intends to w hard in this regard.

We anticipate that the present report will prov further momentum to the discussions and we l forward to the Secretary-General's active engagem in this matter.

The Government of Japan is confident that efforts to reform the United Nations will result i more effective and efficient Organization. Japan

determined to work together with the United Nations and its Member States to realize this goal.

Mr. Yuchengco (Philippines): Today's environment tells us that many of the challenges we face as nations are actually collective concerns which require collective responses. We believe that the United Nations remains the most important international body for generating the necessary multilateral and collective action to address the myriad of international challenges before us. The strengthening of the United Nations is, therefore, an essential aspect of our work.

My delegation is pleased to address the General Assembly on this agenda item and to acknowledge the Secretary-General's initiatives in his unrelenting pursuit of an Organization that is united in purpose and exemplary in performance.

The quick tempo of world events requires the United Nations to maintain its step, to be quick in identifying problem areas and to institute improvements in its system of accomplishing its objectives. There is scope for simplifying procedures and processes, for developing a good pool of talented and trained personnel and for maximizing the benefits of information technology. In this regard, we have elected to keep an open mind and welcome many of the actions proposed by the Secretary-General in his report entitled, "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (document A/57/387).

In particular, we welcome the measures proposed by the Secretary-General to improve coordination in the United Nations system so as to minimize or eliminate duplication, be they in activities, reports or publications. Better coordination should redound not only to the streamlining of the work of the Secretariat and of the intergovernmental bodies, but more importantly, to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization. We also recognize that better coordination will improve policy development and planning.

My delegation concurs with the Secretary-General that there is scope for coordinating and rationalizing work programmes and reports. We have taken note of the Secretary-General's proposal to achieve this and would be interested to see how related subjects could be consolidated.

Likewise, there is scope for simplifying processes, and we look forward to reviewing a programme budget that will better reflect the priorities of the United Nations in a streamlined format that is accessible to readers other than experts. We expect that the new format will allow for a less tedious deliberation of the budget and yet allow for a more substantive debate on its programmatic content.

My delegation believes that the Organization must have the human resource capacity to implement the proposed changes. There is a constant need for upgrading this capacity by providing appropriate incentives and opportunities to enable the Organization to maintain the best pool of talent and to take the necessary measures to continue the upgrading of skills.

My delegation also appreciates the need for effective communication of the United Nations message to sustain the support of the international community for the noble work of our Organization. While millions of people in the world may know of the existence of the United Nations, few have a full awareness of the critical role it plays in our lives and the activities it undertakes to promote development and maintain international peace and security. There is a need to support its work by getting the correct message out through appropriate publications and communications.

Reform may have different connotations. My delegation would like to see it as a continuing improvement of a system, rather than just change for the sake of change or as a cost-cutting measure. At the same time, providing clear goals and processes is necessary in order to eliminate any anxieties we may have in instituting new approaches. We have followed the reform process throughout the past decade and believe that transparency, accountability and universal participation have proven to be the best way of achieving concrete results and ensuring support for reform. We are, therefore, pleased that the consideration of the Secretary-General's report will be undertaken through a more informal and open-ended process of dialogue and exchange of views.

My delegation supports the Secretary-General's efforts at reform and will participate constructively in the work ahead. In this regard, there are some preliminary views we wish to express. First of all, the decision-making process on the Secretary-General's agenda for further change should be open and transparent so as to ensure the widest possible participation.

Secondly, through a process of open dialogue, delegations should be able to distinguish between the actions that are within the Secretary-General's mandate and thus ready for immediate implementation, and the actions requiring endorsement or action by the General Assembly.

Thirdly, we should try to conclude our work on this item as expeditiously as possible, but we must also bear in mind that reform is an ongoing process; some actions may need time to develop or study. Hasty decisions must be avoided.

And finally, although my delegation is open to the content of any resolution on this item, we believe that it should aim more at providing broad and strategic direction for further work on certain actions at a more detailed level, rather than aim at specificity at this time, although specifics may be necessary in some cases. Such an outcome would be in line with our view that United Nations reform is an ongoing process.

Two years ago during the Millennium Summit, our leaders gathered in this Assembly to reaffirm their faith in the ability of the Organization and its Charter to create a prosperous, peaceful and just world. The principal organs of the United Nations each have important roles to play in this regard. This is especially true of the only universal organ, the General Assembly. It is therefore essential that we seek to revitalize the General Assembly so that it can reaffirm its central position as the chief policy-making organ of the United Nations.

My delegation further believes that the General Assembly remains the only principal United Nations organ in which the principle of sovereign equality among States is respected and observed. It is the only principal organ in which all Member States participate equally and democratically in the decision-making process. Moreover, the General Assembly's mandate covers all aspects of multilateral cooperation, especially promoting and sustaining economic growth and development and maintaining international peace and security. It must therefore continuously be in a position to assert these roles.

It is timely and appropriate that the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly be placed once again on the United Nations agenda of priorities. It is also linked in many ways to the proposed agenda for further change of the Secretary-General.

While a number of United Nations reform and strengthening exercises have been undertaken and concluded over the past 10 years, the work of the General Assembly needs to be further enhanced, both internally and in terms of more meaningful interaction with the other United Nations organs, in particular the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The Philippines remains committed to pursuing the many agreed but yet to be implemented measures towards achieving this goal. In particular, we would like to see implementation of the salient features of resolutions 51/241 and 55/285, especially paragraph 14 of 55/285, which mandates further action to be taken on the basis of the debate on the report on the work of the Organization; and paragraphs 18 and 19 of resolution 55/285, which deal, respectively, with the preparation of reports and scheduling of meetings and with the greater use by the President of facilitators, where appropriate.

It is also important to consider ways and means of implementing paragraph 12 of resolution 51/241, which mandates informal consultations under the President or one of the Vice-Presidents to discuss the content of any action by the Assembly based on the debate on the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. Revitalizing and improving the efficiency of the General Assembly should therefore be based on or take off from previously agreed resolutions on revitalization in order to determine whether they are being implemented or to consider the extent to which they have been implemented with a view to possible further action. New and innovative measures should also be considered. We also view the non-paper of the President of the General Assembly at the fifty-sixth session, dated 6 June 2002, as an additional input into the exercise on revitalizing and strengthening the United Nations at this session.

Revitalizing the General Assembly, as envisioned by the founding fathers of the United Nations and as resonated by our leaders during the Millennium Summit two years ago, would reaffirm our faith in the Organization and our commitment to promoting democracy among nations and international cooperation as the main vehicle for addressing the global challenges of our time.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Over the past decades, the United Nations international and global agendas have expanded many-fold. The great conferences of the 1990s added to this unprecedented

scale and dimension. The United Nations needed to be restructured, revitalized and retooled to discharge its burgeoning responsibilities. It was therefore apt for the Secretary-General to respond to these needs by presenting his reform proposals. Through this, he has demonstrated wisdom, vision and commitment. He has also thereby vindicated the confidence reposed by us in him. We thank him for the initiative and also for his succinct presentation of his report this morning.

We see these proposals as part of the process initiated in 1997. An immediate concern was the establishment of managerial efficiency. It is hence natural that we focus attention on rationalization of structures, optimal utilization of resources, elimination of duplication, reinforcement of coordination and introduction of benchmarks for performance evaluation, but there are other concerns as well. We believe that the changes should bring forth improvement in the Organization's capacity to deliver more effectively. They should also enhance the ability of the United Nations to reflect the aspirations of nations and peoples. This should, as the Secretary-General has said, be a process, rather than a one-off event.

The statement made by the representative of Venezuela, as Chair of the Group of 77, reflected our broad views on and expectations of the report. May I now take this opportunity to make a few additional comments on the report.

Human rights is one area where Bangladesh sees merit in the proposed measures, particularly when they relate to supporting countries in building strong human rights institutions and to reviewing the special procedures and those of the treaty bodies. While the United Nations High Commissioner prepares his report next year, we would expect that the Member States will be appropriately consulted.

We support the Secretary-General's proposals to have closer collaboration with civil society. The proposed creation of a panel of eminent persons is commendable. We welcome the measures proposed in the area of public information and documentation. In our view, these aim at creating a culture of communications in the Organization. We recognize the need for focused, well-clarified reporting. We are ready to work on the improvements in this area involving new techniques and technologies. One cannot turn away from so many improved tools and methods available to us, which are far more numerous than they were even a decade back.

At the same time, we also need to recognize that an intergovernmental organization such as the United Nations has Member States with diverse requirements. It is therefore necessary to factor in the diverse requirements of the Members the Organization serves. We endorse the proposals to have focused reports. Indeed, that is needed for the reports to be more imaginative and analytical in addressing issues. This is particularly true for reports in the areas of social development and economic development, which cross-cut each other. But proposed consolidated reports might involve questions related to timing and sequencing with the work of various Committees and bodies. We would appreciate a further elaboration on this aspect. Economic and social development is one area to which my delegation obviously attaches great importance. We welcome the proposal for greater coherence aimed at better service delivery in that broad sector. The proposed modalities, such as joint programming and resource-pooling, are noteworthy. We expect such improvements to better support development and humanitarian programmes, particularly at the country level. I would, in this connection, draw attention to the Brussels Programme of Action adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). That Programme of Action is quite elaborate and clearly delineates actions to be taken by the LDCs and the international community. We are at the initial stage of its implementation and hope the proposed measures will also contribute to the efforts undertaken within the parameters of the Brussels Programme of Action.

A detailed report on technical cooperation is due next year. Still, while outlining the broad principles for defining roles and responsibilities among United Nations entities, the current report mentions that "... technical cooperation should be delivered ... by the entities that have an established field presence and experience". (A/57/387, para. 124 (d))

At this stage, let me underline that there are a number of funds and programmes, for instance UNCTAD, that lack a field presence. We greatly benefit from their activities and value their work. That is why, I would stress, in any re-orientation of support to Member States, the programmatic impact on most developing countries should be appropriately weighed.

I would also stress that, on many occasions, it is difficult to measure the stage of accomplishment reached by a programme activity. This is particularly so in the social and economic areas. This must be considered when deciding on programme closures.

In this Organization, the role of the planning and budgetary process cannot be over emphasized.

Currently, the four-year medium-term plan serves as the principal policy directive for the United Nations. After meticulous examination by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), the plan is adopted and reviewed by the General Assembly. In doing so, all relevant mandates are taken into account. For example, just this summer, as CPC reviewed the current plan, it incorporated the relevant Millennium Development Goals. We are ready to see how CPC's working methods could be further improved.

Related to CPC is the issue of the medium-term plan and its priorities. If the Millennium Development Goals are to be the central set of goals, some elaboration will be needed as to how to reconcile them with the medium-term plan priorities.

There are thousands of unseen hands that provide the backup support to our work. Their welfare is of critical concern to us. The Secretary-General's report has proposed a number of measures to create a more versatile, competent and well-managed workforce. This is welcome.

The Secretary-General has requested clear guidance in the form of a resolution by this Assembly. We owe him this. President Kavan has elaborated a procedure whereby he aims to achieve this objective, through transparent consultations and the help of a few facilitators under his stewardship. We endorse that approach. We commend his commitment. We have every confidence that our combined endeavours will bring this task to fruition.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.